

Sermon Notes

Practical Lessons for Understanding the Word of God



Making Wise Decisions

KEY PASSAGE: Psalm 25:12 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES: Psalm 27:14; 46:10; 62:5 | Proverbs 3:5-6 | Matthew 7:7
Colossians 3:15 | 1 Thessalonians 5:17

SUMMARY

Life is composed of a series of decisions, which is why it's so important to have a plan for making wise choices.

This is something many people never consider, yet the Bible is filled with verses about prayer and discovering God's will. If we follow a plan based on God's Word, we'll make decisions wisely and avoid the difficulties and heartaches that come from wrong choices.

SERMON POINTS

A key to making wise decisions is found in Psalm 25:12, which says, "Who is the man who fears the LORD? He will instruct him in the way he should choose."

God's guidance is promised to those who fear Him. This doesn't mean we're supposed to be afraid of Him, but that we have an attitude of reverence and absolute dependence upon Him.

However, many times we don't depend on the Lord for guidance when we have a decision to make. Since God is omniscient, shouldn't we come to Him first when we are facing an uncertain decision? Yet oftentimes we go to everybody else for advice, or we simply make up our own minds and do what we desire without regard to God's will for us. We may think we're smart enough to handle it ourselves, but we're not. The Lord is willing to give us direction and answer our requests, but He may not do it in the manner or time we expect or desire.

A Plan for Decision-Making

To make wise choices, we need to rely on a plan based on God's Word. The following steps will prepare us to receive and hear His guidance.

Step One: Clear our heart of any known sin.

Sin introduces confusion in our minds and hinders us from receiving divine direction. The Bible is the record of the mind and heart of God. Those who heed it are wise, spirit-filled, and obedient, and they receive His guidance because they have an unhindered relationship with Him.

Before we can hear from the Lord, we must clear out anything in our lives that clouds our thinking or blocks His guidance.

- First of all, we should ask the Lord to show us if there's something sinful in our lives that is keeping us from hearing the truth. It could be a relationship, a habit, a thought pattern, or anything contrary to God's will. The Holy Spirit will be faithful to point out whatever needs to be addressed.
- Next, confess the sin by agreeing with God that it should not be a part of our lives.
- Then, repent by turning away from that sin because it doesn't belong in the life of a believer, and we desire to live in obedience to God.

Step Two: Bring our desires to a position of neutrality.

This can be a real battle when our desire for a particular course of action is strong. However, if we want to receive God's guidance, we must be willing to

yield our preferences to Him and say, “I want to know what You want me to do.” The first time we voice these words we may not actually mean them because our thoughts are still focused on what we want. However, God hears this kind of prayer, and we can trust Him to guide us if we keep coming to Him and bringing our mind and heart into a neutral position of acceptance of whatever He desires.

Step Three: Exercise patience.

Sometimes we may have to pray for a long time before God gives us an answer. He promises that if we ask and seek, we will receive and find, but He doesn't say we will get an immediate response (Matt. 7:7). Therefore, to receive His best, we must be willing to wait for His timing. Waiting upon God means we live in confident expectation of His actions on our behalf and refuse to run ahead of Him or try to solve our problems on our own.

■ **Psalm 46:10** – “Be still, and know that I am God” (KJV).

■ **Psalm 62: 5** – “My soul, wait in silence for God only.”

■ **Psalm 27:14** – “Be strong and let your heart take courage; yes, wait for the LORD.”

God's pauses are very important in His plan for our lives. We can trust that He has good reasons for any delays. He knows when we're not ready for the answer even though we think we are. Perhaps we wouldn't accept His answer if it came any sooner. Our all-wise, omniscient God knows us perfectly and sees clearly what needs to change in our lives before we are ready for His guidance.

Step Four: Be alert to pressure.

The pressures we face when making decisions come from two places.

■ **External pressure.** Friends and family may offer their advice or urge us to quickly make a choice before we've heard from the Lord. However, they don't really know God's will on the matter, and their guidance may be offered out of a desire to please us so we'll be happy. It's better to be

cautious about others' well-meaning advice, and wait for God's timing and direction.

■ **Internal pressure.** Sometimes we put pressure on ourselves to make the choice without God's input because we fear loss or don't want to go in a direction we think He's leading us.

Step Five: Persist in prayer.

First Thessalonians 5:17 says, “Pray without ceasing.” Even if we see no sign of an answer, we must not give up. While we are waiting, God is teaching us to trust Him. He wants us to move from doubt, fear, and unrest to confidence in Him and His timing.

Step Six: Rest in God's promise.

The Bible is our most valuable resource when we have a decision to make because it's the mind of God in print and is filled with His wisdom. If we want to know what He thinks about anything, all we have to do is read His Word. It's like a filter that sifts out the worldly thinking that continually bombards us. He also builds our faith with His sure and unfailing promises.

Step Seven: Wait for His peace.

The Greek word for peace means “to bind together.” When we are in agreement with God on the decision, we are bound together with Him. That's when His peace rules in our hearts (Col. 3:15).

RESPONSE

- How do you usually make decisions? Whom do you consult for wise advice? What role does the Lord play in your decision-making?
- Have you ever jumped ahead of the Lord and made a decision without Him? What was the outcome?
- When you've waited for God's answer, what did you learn during the wait?

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